

Acts 17:29

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

Analysis

Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God (γένος οὖν ὑπάρχοντες τοῦ θεοῦ)—Paul quotes the pagan poet Aratus ('genos' = race, offspring) to establish common ground, then demolishes idolatry with its own logic. If humans, made in God's image, create art and complex designs, how can the Creator be **like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device** (χαράγματι τέχνης καὶ ἐνθυμήσεως ἀνθρώπου)?

The Godhead (τὸ θεῖον, 'the divine nature') cannot be reduced to τέχνη (craft, artistic skill) and ἐνθύμησις (human thought, invention). This is the classic a fortiori argument: If offspring transcends inanimate objects, how much more does God transcend human craftsmanship? Paul's Mars Hill sermon reaches its climax—Athenian intellectuals worshiped the effect (human artistry) while denying the ultimate Cause (the living God).

Historical Context

Paul spoke on the Areopagus (Mars Hill) circa AD 51 during his second missionary journey. Athens was filled with idols—Pausanias later counted over 30,000 statues in the city. The philosophical schools (Stoics and Epicureans) dominated intellectual discourse, but popular religion centered on elaborate temples to Zeus, Athena, and countless deities, all represented by magnificent statuary that ironically demonstrated human superiority to the gods they supposedly honored.

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. What modern 'graven images' do we create—success, ideology, self-image—that reduce God to manageable human categories?
2. How does recognizing humanity as God's 'offspring' (image-bearers) both dignify human creativity and expose the absurdity of projecting our limitations onto the infinite God?

Interlinear Text

γένος	οὖν	ὑπάρχοντες	τοῦ	θεοῦ	οὐκ	
the offspring	Forasmuch then	as we are	G3588	of God	not	
G1085	G3767	G5225		G2316	G3756	
ὀφείλομεν	νομίζειν	χρυσῷ	ἢ	ἀργύρῳ	ἢ	λίθῳ
we ought	to think	unto gold	or	silver	or	stone
G3784	G3543	G5557	G2228	G696	G2228	G3037
χαράγματι	τέχνης	καὶ	ἐνθυμήσεως	ἀνθρώπου	τὸ	
graven	by art	and	device	man's	G3588	
G5480	G5078	G2532	G1761	G444		
θεῖον	εἶναι	ὅμοιον				
that the Godhead	is	like				
G2304	G1511	G3664				

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 40:25 (Parallel theme): To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.

Exodus 20:4 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:

Psalms 106:20 (Parallel theme): Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass.

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